

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1

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Rebuilding the CIA

Reagan's second term may see the resolution of one of the CIA's secret wars - the one that has been waged quietly behind the scenes between Central Intelligence Director William Casey and some of his staff and a group of professionals who share neither his enthusiasms nor convictions. One of Casey's signal achievements has been to inject new life and energy into the U.S. intelligence community. But some of the old-line professionals have been opposed to the operations he has sought to pursue most vigorously. Following the model of the Good Soldier Shweik, these staffers have followed orders but have not provided moral support or personal initiative. Through various channels, some of them have signalled Congress discreetly that they were against some of the actions being taken in the not-so-covert war in Central America. These are the same men who held key posts in the intelligence community in the era of passivity and disenchantment presided over by the Carter administration. Their survival in top CIA jobs today has been due in part to the loss of many of the Agency's best operatives in the 1970s, most notably in Admiral Stansfield Turner's "Halloween Massacre" (see below). But two events within the CIA during Reagan's first term also help to explain the present division of power.

The first was Casey's curious choice of Max Hugel as Director of Operations. This set off a furor amongst intelligence professionals, most of whom believed that Hugel, a street-smart businessman and an old friend of the new DCI, was qualified for the job only by personal loyalty to Casey. The post Hugel was offered is uniquely sensitive, since the Director of Operations is responsible for clandestine operations in the field. Hugel was forced out after a virtual revolt inside the Agency. This episode, coming early in Casey's tenure, bruised his authority within the community.

The second event was the unexpected retirement, at the midpoint of Reagan's first term, of Admiral Bobby Inman as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence. Inman, a former chief of the National Security Agency (NSA), was widely respected throughout the community for his discretion and professionalism, and many insiders felt sure he would eventually succeed Casey in the top intelligence job.

These unrelated episodes brought the Agency's most cautious professionals into positions of control. For many months before the elections, the idea was canvassed widely that Casey would be forced to retire in the near future as the result of pressure from inside the Administration, the Republican Party and the Congress, much of it related to recent events in Central America. A powerful lobby would then be assembled to bring in a professional as director. This would please many in Congress, most notably House Speaker Tip O'Neill. The problem is that, in the present context, such a DCI would be extremely unlikely to be an operations man with a wealth of personal experience

of the realities of intelligence work in the field. Top management of the CIA is good, a veteran intelligence observer comments, but it is exactly that: management. The overriding theme is survival, understandable enough after the traumatic experiences of the past decade and a half, during which the Agency has taken a battering from both Democrats and Republicans.

The CIA's operational capacity was savaged under the Carter Administration. For all the outrage registered over Reagan's campaign statement that the erosion of U.S. intelligence in those years may have contributed to the success of terrorism in Beirut, many insiders think his remarks were justified. Stansfield Turner was quoted as saying that the President must be wrong because the CIA didn't cut a single operative overseas. A number of CIA veterans who were forced out during his incumbency express anger and disbelief that Turner could make such a claim. One *EW* source reports that, as a result of Turner's cuts, in *Western Europe alone*, the CIA:

- Lost 90 per cent of its intelligence reporting ability in West Germany;
- Lost its entire Greek-speaking component in the Athens station;
- Lost the intelligence reporting section of the Paris station;
- Lost its chief of station in Madrid;
- Lost the key operative who had helped to prevent a Communist takeover in Portugal;
- Lost its foremost expert on Western Europe and the Socialist International, with an invaluable - and irreplaceable - network of sources.